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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN THE EDUCATION OF THE DISADVANTAGED GRADUATE STUDENT AND IN THE SOLUTION OF DOMESTIC PROBLEMS ARE AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING GRADUATE EDUCATION. UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTIONS MUST DEVOTE INCREASINGLY GREATER PORTIONS OF THEIR TIME, FACILITIES AND PERSONNEL TO ALLEVIATING EDUCATIONAL DEFICIENCIES RESULTING FROM INADEQUATE PREPARATION OF STUDENTS. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS TO BRING DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS INTO THE INTELLECTUAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL MAINSTREAM OF SOCIETY. THE GRADUATE SCHOOL MUST BECOME INVOLVED IN APPLIED EDUCATION, I.E., IN ESTABLISHING SPECIFIC MACHINERY, INCLUDING SPECIAL DEPARTMENTS, TO STUDY AND PROPOSE SOLUTIONS FOR SOCIOECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF ETHNIC GROUPS. GRADUATE EDUCATION MUST ADDRESS ITSELF TO THE NEEDS OF ACADEMICALLY DISENFRANCHISED STUDENTS AND TO SOCIAL PROBLEMS. (AF)

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THE RELEVANCY OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

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In a letter to me dated February 24, 1969, Dean Herbert D. Rhodes of the University of Arizona posed the following questions:

1. What are the most important issues in graduate education today?

2. What problems do you think deserve Council attention?

3. On what matters should the Council develop policy statements?

In response, I suggested that the following topics should receive highest priority in planning graduate programs:

1. The role of the graduate school in the education of the disadvantaged, post-baccalaureate student, and in the solution of domestic problems.

2. The relevancy of graduate curricula and graduate education in general.

3. The growing disaffection of young graduate students.

4. Financial support of graduate education.

5. The relationship of the graduate school to the military-industrial complex.

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Elaborating further on the first topic, I asserted that there is general agreement that graduate schools have neither provided avenues of education for the academically disenfranchised student, nor applied significant portions of their resources toward the solution of problems of race, poverty, ghetto schools, and urban decay. Some would say that graduate education should not be expected to provide answers to such complex socio-economic problems; but I contend that our graduate programs must provide for those students who are victims of these circumstances if the integrity and viability of the nation are to be maintained.

There are also those who suggest that the needs of the academically deprived students of higher education should be met by undergraduate institutions. It should be pointed out, however, that along with their primary role of providing a broad, liberal arts education, undergraduate institutions find it necessary to utilize increasingly greater portions of their time, facilities, and personnel in the alleviation of residual deficiencies resulting from the inadequate preparation of students during their tenure in high school. Meeting these needs virtually precludes the development and

implementation of programs at the undergraduate level, which would bring the deprived or disadvantaged student into the intellectual and technological mainstream of our society. Programming for this need, therefore, must be carried on by the graduate school, if, indeed, it is to be performed at any educational level.

Question may also be raised as to whether graduate schools should become involved in applied education. It should if one interprets applied graduate education to mean the establishment of specific machinery, not excluding special academic departments, to study and to propose solutions for socio-economic problems of ethnic groups. The traditional approach to the solution of these problems has proved less than effective. Politicians, churchmen, and community groups have in common their more or less complete failure in providing any meaningful relief from the misery suffered by members of America's sub-cultures.

The graduate schools of the nation have the expertise, the freedom, the organization, and the resources necessary for solving these problems, and yet they remain largely uncommitted on this issue.

Failure to assume these new responsibilities, as I see it, merely postpones the involvement which will be dictated by events as well as by graduate students in the near future. It is my firm conviction that The Council of Graduate Schools in the United States should give serious consideration to the problems involved in the implementation of the various facets of applied graduate education while these measures may be evolved through thoughtful planning and deliberation.

To illustrate just what applied graduate education can mean in the life of a ghetto student, I should like to cite a case in point:

In recent years a bright young man came to Texas Southern as the ranking graduate of a very inadequate high school. He elected to major in biology in our College of Arts and Sciences, where he attracted the attention of his instructors through his industry and diligent application of himself to his studies. Being aware of his background deficiencies as well as his potential, the biology staff took a special interest in him, and assisted him in compensating for much of the background training that he had missed

in high school. As a result, he was graduated from Texas Southern with honors.

In spite of his outstanding performance as an undergraduate, however, he was still not adequately prepared to enter medical school as he had hoped, for he failed to make the cut-off point on examinations administered to determine his eligibility for admission. But Texas Southern was not willing to let the matter die there; we were convinced that here was a young man that could achieve academically if he were given special assistance at the graduate level. We, therefore, made financial arrangements for him to attend a small southern graduate school, where again he did outstanding work, leading to the master's degree in biology. His record was then brought to the attention of a relatively large eastern graduate school, where he was accepted into the doctoral program. He went on to earn the Ph.D. in biology there, and today he is teaching zoology to medical students in one of California's major universities.

This is one of a number of cases that could be cited to illustrate the role of the graduate school in salvaging

human resources. When a graduate school refuses to relax archaic admission standards under circumstances which warrant such a measure, when it refuses to change out-dated curricula and requirements for graduates that have no relevancy in modern society, it is denying many educationally deprived young people the opportunity to reach their maximum development; it is denying them the opportunity to move into the mainstream of American life. It is relegating them to the role of dependency upon society rather than that of a contributor to society.

Dr. Bevington Reed, Commissioner of Higher Education for the State of Texas, enunciated very clearly the need for relevance in educational programs today when he said, "the campuses of our institutions of higher education have increasingly become the arenas where confrontations relating to the pressing issues of our time take place. Everywhere there is concern for increased opportunity for higher education, particularly for minority group young people and for those who come from economically and educationally dis-advantaged backgrounds."

He continues, "in a sense, it is as though all the dramatic and urgent issues of our time have come into focus on our college campuses. This presents both a great challenge and a great opportunity for higher education."

The questions which graduate schools today are contemplating defy simple solutions. They are indeed complex matters. Nevertheless, if graduate education is to be meaningful, it must be relevant. It must address itself to the needs of the academically disenfranchised student, to the needs of the inner city, to the needs of our socio-economic system, indeed, to the needs of America.